

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, CENTERS FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES

Washington, DC, June 17, 2014.

Hon. ROY BLUNT,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR BLUNT: Thank you for your letter regarding the recent news story about employees of Serco, a contractor to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), which provides eligibility support for the Federally-facilitated Marketplace (Marketplace). CMS is committed to working with Serco, and all of CMS's contractors, to ensure that federal funds are spent appropriately and that performance expectations are clear and monitored. We closely monitor the work Serco is doing regarding the number of employees it has, including staff allocation by job function, and we are confident that the balance is appropriate.

On April 22, CMS was notified by Serco of a request for an interview with KMOV, a local news station in St. Louis, Missouri, regarding the allegations of misconduct at its Wentzville, Missouri facility. Upon learning about the allegations, CMS formally requested Serco to conduct a compliance investigation for the purpose of reviewing the allegations of inappropriate employee conduct at its Wentzville, Missouri facility as cited in the news story and to take any necessary steps to address them. At this time, CMS does not have any knowledge of similar allegations taking place at any of Serco's other facilities.

Regarding adjustments of Serco staffing levels in response to Marketplace workload, total Serco workforce numbers and patterns vary and are adjusted based on the needs of the contract. Currently, Serco has approximately 3,000 employees stationed among its four locations. The number of Serco staff is reviewed on a regular basis by CMS and adjustments to staffing levels are made as appropriate based on the workload and requirements of the contract. Over the course of open enrollment, and now after open enrollment, CMS has adjusted Serco's workforce to accommodate changing operational needs. For example, CMS adjusted the workforce to process more paper applications last fall, when HealthCare.gov had technical problems, and then again for calling consumers to help them take the necessary steps to complete their enrollment.

For oversight purposes, CMS monitors Serco's performance through a range of contractually required reports, meetings and site visits. CMS receives daily production and staffing reports from Serco, and communicates with Serco representatives daily to discuss operations and policy guidance to ensure adequate staffing levels and operational priorities. CMS has also conducted site visits across all four Serco facilities and is in constant communication with Serco's management team.

Regarding the question of oversight or other actions to ensure compliance with contract terms, in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 42.15, CMS will complete an annual evaluation of Serco utilizing the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System at the end of the base period. In the event of inappropriate activity related to payments already made to Serco, CMS would take recourse that is legally and contractually allowed.

Concerning document production and consumer notifications, since October 1, 2013, Serco has handled more than 1 million documents related to the Marketplace and made

1.4 million outbound phone calls to Marketplace applicants. Serco performs a number of duties for CMS other than processing initial paper applications. Serco workers also are involved with verifying information, processing exemptions, resolving conflicts of information, and calling consumers to obtain missing information or necessary documentation.

Finally, in consideration of whether Serco would be granted a one-year option period at the end of the contract's one-year base period, CMS will conduct a review of the quality of the work currently being performed by the contractor, determine whether the contractor has met the terms and conditions of the contract thus far, and assess if the requirement covered by the option continues to fulfill an existing government need. CMS's review will fulfill all of the conditions prescribed in FAR 17.207, Exercise of Options.

I understand your concerns and appreciate you bringing them to my attention. I will also provide a copy of this response to Senator Lamar Alexander. Once again, thank you for your letter and do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further thoughts or concerns.

Sincerely,

MARILYN TAVENNER,
Administrator.

Mr. BLUNT. I yield the floor and ask unanimous consent that we move to the quorum call and that the time be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE PLIGHT OF MERIAM IBRAHIM

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, the Senator from Texas is on his way to the floor to talk about Meriam Ibrahim. He has been regularly joined by other Senators, including Senators AYOTTE, RUBIO, INHOFE, SHAHEEN, and COONS and many others who share my deep concern. Hundreds of Tennesseans have written and called my office about this situation.

I am outraged by this blatant attack on religious freedom, and I join my colleagues in demanding that the President and the State Department act immediately to help Ms. Ibrahim.

Meriam found herself in this situation because she was born to a Muslim father and an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian mother. Meriam's father abandoned the family when Meriam was 6 years old, so she was raised as a Christian. Meriam later married Daniel, an American citizen, who is also a Christian. The Sudanese Government considers Meriam a Muslim, even though she is a devout Christian.

When Meriam was ordered to renounce her faith, she refused. For that crime, the Sudanese Government condemned her to death. She was convicted and sentenced to receive 100

lashes and then be hanged. To make matters worse, she was pregnant with her daughter when this happened. Her son is less than 2 years old and was forced to live in a women's prison outside Khartoum, where they were held until Monday. Monday we learned Meriam was to be released, but that was a celebration that was short-lived because yesterday she and her family were detained at the airport.

President Obama and the State Department should immediately demand that the Sudanese Government follow their own court's orders and release Meriam and her family. The harassment and targeting of this family must stop immediately. The State Department should be prepared to act quickly to help them leave Sudan as soon as possible.

Occasionally we wonder if words spoken on this floor matter, but in this case I believe they have. This is an outrageous incident that has seared the conscience of Americans and people all over the world. I know in Tennessee many families care about it. I wish to thank Senator CRUZ as well as Senators AYOTTE and RUBIO and INHOFE and SHAHEEN and COONS—Senators on both sides of the aisle—who have used this forum, this tribunal, to talk about the case of Meriam Ibrahim and her plight. It is our hope that the attention, the spotlight placed on this matter will help her be released and that our administration will continue its efforts to register our strong concern.

I am here to express the feelings of hundreds of Tennesseans but also to congratulate Senator CRUZ and the other Senators on both sides of the aisle who have done such an effective job of letting the world know about Meriam Ibrahim and her plight.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 7 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PLIGHT OF MERIAM IBRAHIM

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I rise today to discuss a heartbreaking tragedy that has focused the attention of people across America and people across the world. I rise today to discuss the plight of Meriam Ibrahim. Meriam is a young wife and a young mother. Meriam has two children. She has a son Martin, who is 20 months old, and she has a newborn baby girl Maya, who was just recently born.

Now, the birth of a little girl should be a cause for celebration. But I am sorry to tell you, Madam President, that Meriam gave birth to Maya while in leg irons in a prison in Sudan.

Meriam is married to a U.S. citizen, Daniel. Her two children are American citizens. Why was Meriam in leg irons in a prison cell in Sudan? She was